Reserve Components Commanders and Training

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I do not know when or where, but we will sometime place soldiers in harm's way, on short notice and ask them to defeat a determined and dangerous foe. When that happens, we should be satisfied that we have done our best to prepare them for the task at hand.

— US Army FY00 Posture Statement

WITH THE END of the Cold War, the threat to the United States has changed radically and the Army is changing to meet those new challenges. The US Army Reserve (USAR) and the Army National Guard (ARNG) must also evolve to ensure that they can perform their critical missions. Training and readiness have taken on new meaning in the current climate of a smaller Army based on power projection from a Continental United States (CONUS) platform. An ever-greater operational tempo and increasing numbers of deployments underscore the importance of Reserve Component (RC) readiness.

At its most basic level, readiness in the RC means obtaining and retaining well trained soldiers. Drill attendance and unit status report (USR) personnel ratings are the most visible manifestations of readiness. Key factors that affect personnel readiness, such as recruiting, retention and drill attendance, are direct functions of quality training.

Training systems developed in the Cold War era may not serve us well today. Historically, the RC was able to count on long lead times and moved at a slower pace. However, two singular weeks of annual training no longer ensures adequate training or readiness for today's changing requirements. Aggressive mission-essential task list (METL) training must be done during monthly inactive duty for training (IDT), leaving annual training available for real world support. In the post-Cold War Army, weekend drill training or IDT is the most crucial element of total training strategy.

The company commander is responsible for high-quality weekend training. Unfortunately, commanders are also responsible for almost everything else. However, with only 14 percent of the paid time of their active counterparts, RC company commanders are overwhelmed. In addition to METL training, commanders must deal with schools, personnel, pay, recruiting and retention. Active Component (AC) commanders do not deal with split-option recruits, basic training no-shows or maintaining personnel records. Nor do AC commanders recruit; trained soldiers fill their unit vacancies. The AC structure provides these and other support services to the company commander because these administrative tasks clearly divert training energy. These and other training distracters erode the RC commanders' ability to plan and conduct meaningful training. The commanders' inability to focus on high-quality METL training is compounded by a lack of doctrinal context due to the reliance on geography rather than function in determining RC command structure. As a result, much of the training is conducted without doctrinally-based multi-echelon focus.

Some of the best training in the RC occurs with its AC counterparts whose long-range planning calendar is often no more than 90 to 120 days. In these situations, commanders must serve two masters: a wartrace commander pushing operations and an RSC commander who actually controls resources.

The RC must update its systems with the aim of reducing the burden on its commanders. A number of specific steps will redistribute support functions, reorient resources and change regulations to give commanders more training flexibility. Some proposals are based on our own experience in a typical USAR transportation battalion of five assigned subordinate units. Other recommendations concern systemic changes that will help prepare the RC for this new era.

The strategy that we developed over three years in the 483d Transportation Battalion aimed at three specific areas: reduce administrative burden, develop training synergies between units and offer proper doctrinal guidance. As much as possible, we relieved our commanders of some nonproductive duties and gave them better tools to train and retain ready soldiers. In turn, they were able to focus more of their attention on METL training. In the process, we enhanced overall readiness (as measured by the USR and its supporting documentation), improved drill attendance and increased the units' capabilities, particularly among the battalion staff, to perform their wartime missions. These strategies have applicability to other RC units.

First, we reinforced the training relationship between the companies and the battalion by treating them as line companies. That sounds simple and obvious, but because the RC command structure below the Regional Support Command (RSC) level is diffuse, effective units frequently work outside of formal channels. Our method gave the companies definitive guidance from a dedicated planning and reporting structure and gave the battalion staff a clear mission. This process was far from altruistic on the part of the battalion. In peacetime, companies are training aids for a battalion staff.

Reducing the administrative burden is easier said than done. We decided early that using normal Army reports—those they would see on mobilization—would help significantly. Primarily, we emphasized six reports: USR, unit manning report (UMR), yearly training brief (YTB), training assessment module (TAM), evaluations and monthly training schedules. Of these, the YTB and USR received the most attention. Concentrating on a small number of normal reports reduced the usual problems of processing the reports and made them better management tools. Carefully examining the meaning of USR numbers revealed strategies to enhance readiness. For example, the battalion headquarters and headquarters company chose to defer filling vacant watercraft operator and engineer positions to avoid competition with the heavy boat company.

Extensive use of e-mail made a great difference. All primary staff and commanders used e-mail routinely, resulting in large de facto full-time staff that even held virtual staff meetings. Primary staff members contributed electronic status reports, which were accumulated and distributed by the executive officer. This written record of routine information was accessible to all and reduced meetings' frequency and duration. Actual staff meetings were more focused on training and operational issues requiring real-time discussion.

Next we took control of IDT. By pooling available resources, we found natural synergies that enhanced the quality of training. The resources at hand included the five integral companies and one detachment attached to the battalion for peacetime administration—all transportation-related units. In addition, the bay area is rich in other transportation resources: an excellent natural harbor, outstanding port facilities, a large population base and several transportation units from the other services. This critical mass of soldiers, equipment and functionally related units combined with the local resources for outstanding training opportunities and our own "center of transportation excellence."

C^2 in the RC has traditionally depended on geography rather than common function. However, generic and functionally unrelated C^2 headquarters are inherently limited in their ability to provide the kind of technical oversight, doctrinal guidance, training contacts, career progression and interactions that are vital for RC units in an era of shortened planning cycles and greater interaction with other AC and RC units.

Our center of excellence had many advantages beyond the opportunities for high-quality IDT. Using the battalion as a point of contact also enhanced communication with the doctrinal components. Training at a distance became more efficient, and valuable doctrinal guidance could be used more effectively which helped our commanders obtain access.

As is true in most population centers, the San Francisco Bay area contains RC units from all of the other services. These transportation-related activities include a US Naval Reserve (USNR) cargo handling battalion (essentially stevedores) and access to the maritime administration (MARAD) reserve fleet ships. The US Marine Corps Reserve has a beach and terminal operations company (essentially a terminal services company). The USNR and US Coast Guard Reserve (USCGR) have joint units for harbor defense. And the US Air Force Reserve has an affiliated program for air-load training. We capitalized on each of these sister-service capabilities to leverage our own resources.

Innovative use of all local resources allowed us to conduct significant transportation exercises with essentially no funding beyond that normally allocated for IDT. Our IDT field training exercises (FTXs) occurred at multiple locations in Northern California. In one case, part of the battalion's annual training was scheduled over a three-day drill weekend for

the battalion's five assigned companies so the staff could train with a full-up battalion without capitalizing on all of the companies' annual training time.

We proactively sought wartrace and doctrinal guidance from higher headquarters to put our training program in proper perspective and keep us training on the important aspects of our mission. Although this is an obvious approach, it is often beyond the ability of a company commander, particularly with the enormous number of competing demands. This problem can be exacerbated when non-functionally aligned higher headquarters are unaware of whom to contact. We cultivated wartrace relationships for each of our units (transportation, engineer and quartermaster) through several devices, including battalion dinings out, video teleconferences with wartrace headquarters for YTBs, invitations to general officers and by hosting doctrinal and wartrace conferences. By collecting accurate doctrinal guidance, we were able to help the commanders plan, conduct and evaluate their METL training.

No training opportunity was overlooked. Training and operational directives always came in five-paragraph warning, operation and fragmentary orders. Staff noncommissioned officers conducted formal information and decision briefs for the battalion staff and commanders. This type of staff training reinforced the relationship between the companies and the battalion and gave clear guidance for intensive and meaningful exercises.

As a battalion, we attempted to maximize the flexibility of the current RC structure and regulations in order to support our initiatives. Our strategy produced specific documented successes in an RC

Training Support XXI

Lieutenant General George A. Fisher, US Army, Retired

Today's Army is at its lowest force structure size since World War II and its missions continue to grow dramatically. The Army's success in this environment will depend greatly on fully leveraging the capabilities of the Reserve Component (RC). This is not only an operational requirement; it is necessary to continue to build trust and confidence between the active and RC force. The Army has begun a host of initiatives to strengthen this relationship and build its composite capability.

One of these initiatives is Training Support XXI (TSXXI), an innovative new structure to revolutionize training support for the Army National Guard (ARNG) and the Army Reserve (USAR). This concept provides a streamlined, efficient structure for training support; exports the combat training center (CTC) methodology at platoon and company level; and builds tri-component organizations focused solely on training. This initiative has the potential to enhance training proficiency and build an Army partnership for the future.

The previous training support structure evolved piecemeal over 20 years, resided in multiple chains of command and was hard to coordinate and focus. Most important, RC commanders were required to deal with a host of different organizations to obtain support for training. Due to operational tempo challenges, support from active divisions was often accomplished by a wide variety of units. It was extremely difficult to achieve consistent partnerships at battalion and brigade level.

The new structure fields an organization specifically designed to accomplish training support. A training support brigade (TSB) commander owns the structure to support most units in his area of operations. This organization provides RC commanders one-stop shopping for all their training support needs. The TSB commander controls the structure providing the support, so the agreements can be made at the lowest possible level.

As is the heart of the new concept, the TSB is designed to operate as an "operations group," similar to the National Training Center (NTC) or the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). The TSB is composed of battalions, which are really observer/controller (OC) packages like those at a combat training center (CTC). Its mission is to provide CTC-quality lanes and training support at platoon and company level to the ARNG and the USAR. In essence, TSB provides at platoon and company level what the CTCs provide at battalion and brigade level—enhanced leader development and unit proficiency. The application of these same principles to RC platoon and company training will prove dynamic as well. The mobile, deployable TSB brings these lanes to RC units at their home training areas. The experience levels in these TSBs are significant. In one TSB alone, 945 NTC rotations are represented—on average each OC has over six CTC rotations. The potential to coach, teach and share lessons is superb.

The tri-component nature is another fundamental of this new structure. The goal was to leverage the strengths of each component to build an integrated structure that would function as a unit. This practice will expand experience across the force and produce echelons of leaders from each component who have served together in a unique organization. That experience will foster trust and confidence among the components as these leaders mature and move to other responsible positions.

The new structure also has the potential to make training more realistic. It can provide the exercise control structure to help administer an exercise so the player unit headquarters can concentrate on its own mission essential tasks. This exercise control structure can also account for training tasks that every unit should perform during the exercise. If the task is not occurring naturally, the control structure has the resources to generate the event

transportation battalion. We believe these initiatives in conjunction with some others may significantly improve the readiness of RC units as part of America's Army. However, the existing framework was developed when the world and the RC were different. We need to continually examine our organization and systems to ensure that they support unit commanders and give them more tools with which to keep their units full, deployable and ready.

Although several aspects of our strategy will translate easily to other RC units, we believe this is only a small beginning. RC commanders face an overwhelming burden, and they need more relief than an isolated battalion or brigade headquarters can provide. To this end, we offer the following systemic measures for consideration.

Aggressive METL training must be done during monthly inactive duty for training (IDT), leaving annual training available for real world support. In the post-Cold War Army, weekend drill training or IDT is the most crucial element of total training strategy.

Align units functionally. Command and control (C^2) in the RC has traditionally depended on geography rather than common function. However, generic and functionally unrelated C^2 headquarters are inherently limited in their ability to provide the kind of technical oversight, doctrinal guidance, training contacts, career progression and interactions that are vital for RC units in an era of shortened planning cycles and greater interaction with other AC and RC at the right time and place. This is a unique resource that major commands, adjutants general, and Reserve Support Command commanders can use to facilitate exercise design. This technique also places units in a multiechelon wartime context rather than a pure lane situation and optimizes lessons learned. Essentially, the TSB can replicate true battlefield geometry using integrated lanes and have each unit function where it naturally would on the battlefield. Each unit can have its own OC package that will remain throughout the exercise to optimize the feedback process.

This structure is robust enough to also provide training support to units that are not in the force support packages. Any RC unit should go to its local TSB commander with training support needs. If the local TSB commander cannot meet the requirement, the training support division (TSD) commanders can cross-level and reinforce across TSB boundaries to accomplish the desired support. The TSD plays a key role in the coordination and synchronization of the TSB and simulation brigade effort.

One of the important experience factors for the active force over the past 15 years has been the influx of CTC-trained officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) into units. That potential now exists for the ARNG. Each adjutant general can attach any number of Mobilization-Day officers or NCOs to a combat arms OC package for a year or two. Those attached will be school-trained as OCs and have an opportunity during inactive duty training (IDT) and annual training (AT) to actually perform as OCs for units in training. After several years, they would return to their units as an OC train-the-trainer, and also to help cross-level the best techniques from several years of observation.

This same opportunity exists for the USAR. The combat service support OC packages in this structure are primarily Army Reservists. After three years of OC duty, they could be moved (geography permitting) to a local table of organization and equipment (TOE) unit taking the same experience factors with them. Over time, this would help increase the experience level in RC units and reduce post-mobilization training time. As we expand our thoughts on how to "team" AC units with RC units, again the TSXXI structure can play a role. When an AC unit and an RC unit decide to train together, TSXXI can help with the exercise control structure and provide the OC packages for the RC units. Without the requirements for this overhead, AC units can think more aggressively about partnership training.

TSXXI merges the Bold Shift philosophy with CTC methodology and fields an experienced tri-component team to implement it. In its first year this structure is achieving 50 percent more support with 25 percent less structure and 10 percent less cost. In addition to supporting good premobilization training, it also helps RC units prepare for operational missions worldwide once they are identified for mobilization. For the first time, we have streamlined, integrated structure providing dedicated support to our RC units. Soldiers are training together to plan and execute as an AC/RC team. This partnership will pay huge dividends in the future. ***MR***

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US Army

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units. Modern communication has greatly reduced the administrative advantages of geographic proximity to the C^2 headquarters. In a perfect world, all units would be functionally aligned. The minimum should be that functional higher headquarters are actively involved in reviewing YTBs and USRs and in providing training guidance to units.

Make the training environment more flexible. Commanders face increasing conflicts between requirements to prepare budget estimates for future training and seize short-notice opportunities. Some of the best training in the RC occurs with its AC counterparts whose long-range planning calendar is often no more than 90 to 120 days. In these situations, commanders must serve two masters: a wartrace commander pushing operations and an RSC commander who actually controls resources.

Establish administrative holding companies. RC commanders spend an inordinate amount of time on administrative actions that their AC counterparts never see. Dealing with unqualified soldiers (split-option soldiers, soldiers awaiting shipment for basic training and other unqualified soldiers) is a significant part of this burden. Responsibility for these unqualified soldiers should be assigned to an administrative holding company at each major support command (MSC) under the command of an RSC holding battalion. The holding company might be an organization to which the unqualified soldiers were actually assigned. In that case, the holding company could ensure preparation of soldiers for qualification training by conducting basic soldier training, such as land navigation, physical training, weapons maintenance, drill and ceremonies and uniform wear, before basic combat training. In another variation, the holding company would assist the commander by overseeing the administrative paperwork while the soldiers were assigned to their normal unit. In either case, they would serve as the primary interface with the recruiting command and school brigades and ensure the publication of timely and accurate orders. The holding company would greatly reduce the current burden on the commanders.

Create centers of excellence. These centers for combat service support and service support functions and skills would bring together functionally related units in combination with additional local resources, such as school battalions, special training facilities and attractive geographic features like units from the reserves of the other services. In addition, AC-to-RC support functions such as readiness groups and training brigades could be concentrated at the centers. Commanders would benefit from assistance in planning challenging training. Synergies resulting from the concentration of resources will result in enhanced training and readiness for all units. The advantages for recruiting, retention and effective training are several and compelling:

- *More effective IDT training.* Typically, an RC unit has a limited amount of equipment and limited abilities to conduct realistic training. To be truly effective, IDT requires the right units, soldiers and equipment. Centers of excellence would provide this concentration of needed resources.
- *Improved dissemination of new doctrine.* With multiple units at a single location, communication with the doctrinal component and training at a distance become more efficient, and valuable resources can be used more effectively. Commanders would have better access to new technical guidance.
- *Enhanced career progression of soldiers.* Moving soldiers to higher command echelons broad-

ens their professional growth in a given career field. This flexibility is crucial for retaining highly skilled soldiers who must, under most conditions, drill near their home.

Expand recruiting areas. The same 50-mile radius that protects soldiers from being required to travel excessive distances to drill limits recruiting efforts. Even in large metropolitan areas where driving long distances to civilian employment is routine, recruiting command will not recruit soldiers who live more than 50 miles from the reserve center. Certain high-skill, short-supply MOSs should be recruited nationwide, such as vessel masters and chief engineers, surgeons, operating room nurses and chaplains. The time and resources required to recruit and train soldiers, particularly the high-skill, short-supply MOSs, make it imperative that we retain these soldiers in troop program units.

Current drill attendance regulations make it difficult for soldiers to travel more than minimal distances to drill. Soldiers must pay their own travel to IDT. Existing regulations or local policies limit unit's ability to tailor drill schedules for valuable soldiers living at a distance from the unit. Several changes can help:

- Encourage commanders to schedule multiple unit training assembly-10s (MUTA-10s), which equal five training days, to make long-distance travel by the soldier worthwhile and to take advantage of specific training opportunities. This can work. Our heavy boat company has an LCU-2000 crew that lives in Houston, Texas and the crew pays its own way to drill in Stockton, California. They travel 2,500 miles to drill at their own expense four times per year for a MUTA-8 (four training days). We guarantee them that they will sail every time and they have never missed a drill.
- Form detachments that would train on a separate drill schedule to accommodate soldiers traveling great distances.
- Allow some positions to be filled for mobilization purposes with fully qualified Inactive Ready Reserve soldiers.
- Consider a travel subsidy for specific critical MOSs. Implement a program to pay all or part of the drill travel for soldiers with particular skills. This cost-effective measure would allow the Army to retain soldiers with unique or critical skills or expensive training the Army has already funded. For example, a vessel master (880A1) costs more than $100,000 to train. At a government rate of $200.00 per month for air fare to and from drill, the master would cost the government about $2,400 per year or less than $50,000 for a 20-year career, far less than finding and training a new master.

Wartrace relationships were cultivated for each of our units (transportation, engineer and quartermaster) through several devices, including battalion dinings out, video tele-conferences with wartrace headquarters for YTBs, invitations to general officers and by hosting doctrinal and wartrace conferences.

Each of these recommendations would help reduce the great burden on our RC company commanders and allow them to focus more effectively on elements of training and retaining good soldiers. In fact, we have seen several of them bear results in practice—mostly it is a matter of mindset. As we continually review our requirements to meet soldiers' needs and cull out what is unnecessary, we keep our soldiers working and coming back for more—we all win. ***MR***

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